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NRO review(s) completed.

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25 SEP 1968

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director for Science and Technology

SUBJECT : CIA Participation in Technical Collection
Systems for Overhead Reconnaissance

REFERENCE : DD/S&T 3535-68, dtd 11 September 1968

1. In August 1965, the Deputy Secretary of Defense and the Director of Central Intelligence signed an agreement which established the current charter of our National Reconnaissance Program. This agreement was not arbitrarily reached, but rather, was a culmination of many efforts, some successful and some less successful, to devise a mechanism which would permit the conduct of our Nation's reconnaissance activities in a manner which would fully exploit the entire resources of the United States Government and bring to bear on this effort the particular talents, experiences, and capabilities of the Department of Defense and those of the Central Intelligence Agency.

2. Up to that point in time, CIA had been responsible for several most successful contributions to our Nation's reconnaissance effort. It was under CIA's management and leadership that the U-2 aircraft was developed which provided our policy makers with the first substantive photographic coverage of the Sino-Soviet Bloc since World War II. It was CIA's uniqueness in technical direction and contracting and security management in combination with a highly competent industrial team that brought this system from drawing board to first flight in less than 9 months. These same singular talents were again employed when the Agency proved itself a wise developer of satellite systems when the CORONA Program began its operational life in August 1960. This indeed was a noteworthy event since not only did we obtain photographic intelligence but it was the first time that the United States had recovered any object from orbit. It was the Agency again which sparked the development

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and operation of the OXCART aircraft. This Program produced the first Mach 3 aircraft and again demonstrated the Agency's ability to produce reconnaissance systems in a spectacular manner; to wit, the gestation period from preliminary study to first flight took some 56 months as opposed to 83 months for the B-58 (Mach 2 aircraft) and well over 100 months for the B-70.

3. By August 1965, when the present agreement was signed, we were beginning to experience a changing environment in the reconnaissance arena. The streamlined management, contracting, and security techniques which had been the hallmark of CIA were rapidly being adopted by the Air Force in its black reconnaissance activities. CIA, in fact, had assigned contracting and security personnel to the Air Force satellite programs to assist them in setting up carbon copies of CIA procedures; and the Air Force was soon able to put into practice on its own a good many of our desirable techniques.

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4. A second situation had occurred which also changed the picture somewhat. Unlike the small U-2 Program (initial contract some [REDACTED] or the "quick and dirty" CORONA Program (it is still flying), the reconnaissance systems which were to come into being ranged into the [REDACTED]. This fact placed upon the Agency the burden to ensure, through close technical mentorship and exacting procedural disciplines, that the Government's investment was most fully protected and that indeed such technically complex systems would be designed and developed to fulfill our priority intelligence needs. We had seen then, by August 1965, that the Air Force was coming closer to CIA's unique ways of management while CIA, in turn, because of the magnitude of its efforts, was adopting a more conservative manner. While we might rightfully feel that the Agency still has a leg up in this regard, it could by no means provide in itself the basis for an argument why CIA must be in the reconnaissance business.

5. It was evident, however, to the architects and co-signers of the NRO Agreement that CIA did possess the experience and had

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within its resources an outstanding stable of technical talent to
prosecute our reconnaissance programs.

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These "firsts" for CIA were adequate demonstration that the Agency possessed the perceptiveness and technical competence to apply aerospace technology to the satisfaction of critical intelligence requirements. It is this characteristic of the Agency, we submit, which led our Nation's policy makers into ensuring that CIA continue its vigorous role in our National Reconnaissance Program.

6. It is little wonder that CIA can take such an outstanding lead in our reconnaissance efforts when one realizes that intelligence production is the primary interest of this Agency--that the thrust of our existence is towards that end alone and not diffused by other objectives such as the armed services must pursue in providing for our national defense and military posture.

7. Additionally, the close coupling which the developers enjoy within the Agency with the intelligence analysts permits an iterative process between the user and the developer which is so necessary to ensure a complete satisfaction of intelligence needs in hardware efforts. This tight loop offers a critical feedback to remind the developer constantly of his intelligence objectives. It is a forum through which the developer and the user share completely in the understanding and appreciation of each one's needs. This fact should not be slighted since it has fostered modifications to our hardware to accommodate peculiar but important intelligence requirements and also has given us the impetus to perfect our targeting capabilities.

8. Additionally, and possibly equally important, it has given us a working relationship which is most salable to the talented technical personnel staffing our organization. Because of this proximity to the end use, we have been able to attract highly capable individuals from the aerospace industry who have taken a substantial reduction in salary to join in the Agency's endeavors.

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In turn, they have attracted additional talent which assures us of assets incomparable in generating the analysis, design, and developments required to further our intelligence goals.

9. There is another transition at hand in the reconnaissance programs for which the Agency is ideally suited. We are rapidly reaching that state-of-the-art where refinements on existing systems and approaches will be the keynote in the NRP portfolio. Following our next step into the [redacted] we may very well find ourselves content with the inventory of our systems, and we will focus our attention on matching, through system modifications, the then existing capabilities to the ever-changing intelligence needs. Where else can resources, temperament, purpose, and organizational structure be more readily brought to bear on this problem than in CIA?

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10. We further contend that the Director of Central Intelligence can more fully execute his monitorship of the Nation's Reconnaissance Program when actively engaged in a line responsibility for a part of that effort, if not the whole, than if he had no organizational tie and his sole contact was through a committee arrangement such as EXCOM.

11. In the real and practical world, it is extremely prudent for the United States Government to continue a judicious and controlled competitive environment with CIA and DoD in the pursuit of the National Reconnaissance Program. It is not really a question of whether the United States Government can afford to have CIA as well as DoD engaged in reconnaissance efforts, but rather, can it afford not to. We submit that the Agency's record as well as its in-house talents, resources, and orientation speak in favor of CIA's active and continued participation in the design, development, and operation of overhead reconnaissance systems.

/s/ John N. McMahon

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Acting Director of Special Projects

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